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11 FEB 1970

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, Program "D"

ATTENTION :

THROUGH :

Executive Director,  
National Photographic Interpretation CenterSUBJECT : NPIC Recommendation for the Selection of a Side-  
Looking Radar Target Test Area

1. In response to [ ] telecon, this is to confirm and summarize the oral presentation of the subject recommendation at the NRO meeting of 20 January 1970. This recommendation is in response to an NRO request of NPIC to select what they consider as the most suitable of several target areas outside the continental United States for the testing of an advanced SLR system to determine its potential to produce intelligence information. This is not considered as an NPIC requirement for SLR collection capabilities.

2. In attempting to determine the most suitable target area, NPIC reviewed Southeast Asia, the Korean DMZ, the South China coast, the Middle East, and Cuba. Primary consideration was given to the following factors in each case:

- a. The broadness of the target sample available.
- b. The applicability of the target sample to worldwide strategic reconnaissance exploitation requirements.
- c. The intelligence data base available, particularly aerial photography.
- d. The accessibility of the target area regarding simultaneous or nearly concurrent SLR and photographic coverage.
- e. The potential of SLR to answer existing intelligence requirements on the target area.

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3. Other factors not necessarily directly related to NPIC functions but worthy of consideration in making a choice of areas included such matters as logistics, the timely responsiveness of the imagery exploitation evaluations to the flight operations of the test, and the political considerations of overflight and peripheral flight operations.

4. NPIC considers Cuba to be the best target area for the purposes of this SLR test by a considerable margin for the following reasons:

- a. The current COMIREX target list totals about 185 in Cuba. The list includes most types of military targets in the air, naval, and ground order-of-battle categories. Included in this list are various types of logistic support facilities, SA-2 missile sites and cruise missile installations.
- b. An extensive all-source data base is available.
- c. The composition, disposition, and environment of the targets in Cuba are similar to those in the major denied areas of the world.
- d. Side-looking radar with 10-foot resolution should allow us to detect changes in air, naval, and ground order-of-battle; and, if obtained during exercise periods or alert postures, it may permit us to detect significant activities. Since we detect relatively little military movement during daylight ☐missions, we suspect that most military movement (including perhaps activity at key storage areas) takes place during the hours of darkness and periods of poor visibility.
- e. Our experience in evaluating SLR imagery indicates that simultaneous or near-concurrent aerial photography is invaluable in deciphering anomalies, determining

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e. (Cont.)

the accuracy of SLR interpretation and assessing sensor system capabilities. It appears likely that, in reasonably dense target areas, as few as two good simultaneous or near-concurrent photo missions might suffice. Cuba offers an opportunity for this type of photo coverage.

f. The close proximity of Cuba and the established channels between collection and exploitation agencies for Cuban area coverage offer a flexibility of operations which should contribute to economy of both flight operations and exploitation resources.

g. The test aircraft would have great flexibility in the choice of flight path, SLR depression angle, and slant range from the targets, thus allowing close simulations of the attitudes of a SLR in a

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5. In addition to Cuba, the following areas were also studied, but were considered undesirable for the reasons given:

a. Middle East

The terrain, target dispersion, and political environment are not well suited to the test objectives. Simultaneous or near-concurrent photo coverage would be extremely difficult to obtain.

b. Korean DMZ

The target composition and dispersion reflect a tactical situation considerably different from the strategic environment with which NPIC is concerned. The targets consist of small military camps with very little exposed equipment, and contain underground support facilities and field positions (bunkers, caves, and trench works). The rough terrain would impose a

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b. Korean DMZ (Cont.)

false limitation on the SLR [ ] since many targets would be masked due to the line of site characteristics of the SLR, and the relatively low altitude [ ] In our opinion, the SLR test imagery of this area would not produce fair and conclusive results in terms of the test objectives.

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c. Southeast Asia

Although most criteria such as data base, accessibility, and simultaneous photo coverage can be met in this area, two significant limitations occur; target types and disposition are not typical of the strategic situation, and much of the terrain (the foliage in particular) is highly unfavorable to the use of SLR. This is not typical of most areas of current strategic interest. In our opinion, tests in this area would entail an extensive target acquisition program, primarily over North Vietnam, in order to meet test objectives. We also believe that SLR would have little potential for meeting area intelligence requirements which are primarily tactical in nature.

d. South China Coast

While a reasonable sampling of target types could be achieved in this area, the data base is not as complete or current as it is in either Cuba or Southeast Asia. The difficulty of obtaining concurrent overhead photography is a second disadvantage. These two disadvantages would reduce our ability to meet the objectives of the SLR test program. The desired flexibility and timeliness of response between collector and imagery evaluation would be difficult to achieve in view of the operational environment in this area.

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6. In summary, our review indicates that the selection of Cuba as a test target area offers the best opportunity for an objective, comprehensive evaluation of the proposed SLR system and the use for which it is intended.

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Chief, Technical Services & Support Group, NPIC

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